

Salvation Songs, Salvation Stories

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[0 : 00] Such a beautiful revival, Sam, that, isn't it? Just wonderful to sing. Well, in Martin's Memorial, we do sing a lot of modern and contemporary songs.

! We also have traditional hymns, and we do sing psalms, but it is lovely to come and to hear the psalms afresh. So I guess at the get-go, I should tell you that I'm a really big music fan, and I had the delight of training as a musician.

Well, sorry, I say as a musician, as a drummer. Our drummer's musicians, they're not really. So I found out tonight, you know. I'm joking. But I've been playing the drums for over 20 years, and I really love it.

I've had the privilege of studying music in Edinburgh, playing in different bands in different parts of the country, and in other places as well. I've played in a Christian blues band for one night.

We were doing a pub gig in Edinburgh, and there was like three or four people. And I've played in theatres, and there's a few thousand people. And I've had a few other experiences, you know, here and there. But I think of all the things I've experienced personally, it kind of pales in comparison to what I might describe as being maybe the biggest musical act in the world just now.

[1 : 16] And that's Oasis. You know, I think we can maybe, if you're an Oasis fan or not, it doesn't matter. But they're probably the biggest band on the planet, again, after their heyday in the 90s, given their reunion, and just seeing people posting on Facebook, and, you know, going to see their concert, and the historic reunion.

And I've seen next month that they're re-releasing their seminal album, What's the Story, Morning Glory, you know, with great hits, Champagne, Supernova, Wonderwall, Don't Look Back in Anger. And just, this isn't just an odd way of starting a sermon. It does hopefully link in later on, as you might find. But that album, What's the Story, Morning Glory, by Oasis, it's really the experience for them of what it was like to be a pop star in a band, what it was like to struggle with fame and success, what it was like to have it all thrown in your face, this fame and how they would deal with it.

And their story, Oasis, has been one of both massive success and also very major public fallouts between the two Gallagher brothers. And their reunion has been all about bringing back the magic of yesteryear and the reunion of this 90s band, probably in a similar way that if the Beatles reformed, if they were all still alive, the Beatles being the biggest band of the 60s, Oasis perhaps one of the biggest bands, if not the biggest band of the 90s.

And so in thinking of that sort of reunion and thinking of bringing stories together, we're thinking tonight about salvation stories and salvation songs from Psalm 95.

[3 : 00] And we're going to be thinking about what it means to celebrate God's salvation work among his people, among us as his people, among his people all through history, among his people, the people of Israel.

And right down through history to today, what has God done? What is he doing? What is he calling us into? And Psalm 95 is a collection, part of a collection of Psalms, Psalm 92 to 98, which are kind of the same sort of Psalm.

They're Psalms for corporate worship where we'd gather together and sing about the nature of God and the character of God and learn about the truths of God, but also experience the very real power and presence of God in that.

And just as in the Psalms, you have different sort of themes, Psalms of lament, Psalms of praise, royal Psalms, Psalms of trust, Psalms where the Psalmist gets really angry and you're like, oh, I'm a bit, oh, I don't know if I can, can I read that?

Can I sing that? Throwing rocks at people, you know, let's maybe not go there. But there are Psalms for all sorts of different types of situations and emotions and experiences of life.

[4 : 08] But Psalm 95 is part of the how-to in terms of corporate worship. How are we to worship God? How are we to praise Him? How are we to offer our lives to Him?

And it's a Psalm that begins with a divine invitation. So I really want to think of just three words tonight. And the first word is the word come, to come. And that's where we find the Psalm begins that we see these words, oh, come, let us sing to the Lord.

that it's an invitation from the living God to come to Him, essentially as we are, and then to offer Him, as we are, our whole lives, our whole body, soul, spirit, and to do so in response to who He is, in relation to who He is and what He says about us.

And this Psalm reveals to us, as you can see on the screen there, it says that this Psalm says that the God we worship, the God we come to, is the Lord. He's the rock of our salvation.

He's a great God. He's a great King above all other gods. He's a wonderful creator God, as we see in verses 4 and 5, that in His hand are the depths of the earth, the heights of the mountains are His also.

[5 : 23] The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. In other words, this wonderful God that we worship as the creator, He is the owner and the manager of all creation.

He holds it in His hands. And He's our God, we see in verse 7. He's our God. We're His people, and we belong to Him as sheep belong to a shepherd.

And I was delighted to come over here for the Carlyway show and to see shepherds at work and to see all of that. And that was the first experience for me of that, even though I'm an islander, a townie, but it was so good to see.

But we really see that in this psalm, that we are the people of God and we belong to Him as a sheep belongs to a shepherd. And so this psalm really reveals who God is, but it also calls forth the people of God to worship Him as one who is far above everything and anyone and anything else in all galaxies and supernovas and everything else out there.

And this is where we see that far above everything in that, that the wideness of who God is is we zone in in the very first word and we see we come with, and we see this in different lights.

[6 : 42] We see come with reverence, come and kneel before the Lord, our Maker. We see that in verse 6. Oh, come, let us worship and bow down before Him, get prostrate, get low before Him.

and He's the King and Shepherd and Maker of all. He's the God who's in charge of everything. So we bow down before this Alpha and Omega God, the God who knows the beginning from the end, the God who knows us from the inside out, the God who knit us together when we were in our mother's womb, the God who says that we're fearfully and wonderfully made, and because that's the case, we're to live in the fear of His name.

So we come with reverence and with fear of who this God is, and maybe you've been in situations where you've experienced the reverence of God through a sung worship, through corporate worship, through a service.

Maybe there's been times in your life where you've known God come close in a particular instance and you just know God's close and you don't know what to do other than just be still and know that He's God.

If I can maybe give you one example of this, I remember being in a church gathering away when I was living in Edinburgh, I went to a church called Holy Trinity Westerhales, and we went away for a weekend.

[7 : 57] I think we were in Lendrick Muir, the Scripture Union headquarters, and we had a visiting speaker, kind of like a communions weekend, but without the communion.

It was a really blessed weekend. We had great teaching and we had great fellowship together as a church family, and we had great times of sung praise as well. And I remember there was one instant, actually we did have communion, I'm just remembering it now, we did have communion because it was a Sunday morning, and we had just taken communion, and we sung in response to that the wonderful Isaac Watts hymn, When I Survey the Wandrous Cross, beautiful hymn.

And I was playing in the worship, the praise band, and my close friend Pete was leading the worship, and halfway through the song, he just stopped playing.

And I looked around the congregation, and I saw a few folk being visibly, emotionally affected, just a few tears. It wasn't anything dramatic, it wasn't anything, you know, really, really, you know,

profound weeping.

It was simply that there was an awe in the room, there was a holy hush, and I stopped playing. It was almost as if I had to put my drumsticks behind my back, and my arms behind my back, because we all stopped, we all paused and hushed, we all were surveying the wondrous cross, and we just realized, wow, Jesus has saved me.

[9 : 21] Jesus has given up his life, so that I might know his forgiveness and his fullness. And in that moment, God came especially close to us, and so the only thing we could do was close our mouths, and say, God, thank you.

Thank you for the wonder of the cross, thank you for what you have done for me, thank you for my salvation, we bow before your name, because you are so incredible. And so that's an instance in my life where I can remember back, and perhaps you've got similar stories, where you've just known that the awe of God, the reverence of God, in a time of corporate worship, maybe personally alone, or on another occasion.

But then we've also got in this joyful noise, and coming into God's presence with thanksgiving, we've got really celebratory worship, joyful noise, songs of praise.

In other words, it's like the psalmist is saying, along with reverent worship, we've got such rowdiness, if I can put it like that, rowdiness with reverence, that affords such a celebration because of our salvation.

It's like God's goodness has been revealed, God's glory has been revealed, it's like when Moses, the Lord spoke to Moses and said, yeah, I'm going to show you my glory through my goodness, and it's maybe you've been in a church on occasion where you've experienced the goodness of God, and it just brings a smile to your face, but it's not just a superficial smile, but it's a really deep from the bowels of your gut sort of smile.

[11 : 06] and it really is the reality of our every Sunday response that we dedicate approximately 20 minutes of an hour or so long service to singing.

I mean, it's quite a strange thing when we think of it, why do we spend so much of our service singing? It's not just for those of us who are musical, but it's for each and every one of us, it's for the whole people of God, it's such an important part of our worship.

And if I can just maybe share with you one or two examples where I've known the joy of the Lord through song worship, I remember I was part of this Christian conference and I was playing with a singer called Steph MacLeod, and maybe some of you have heard of Steph's music, and he's a wonderful singer, songwriter, and part of Steph's testimony is that he was homeless, he was an alcoholic, he was a drug addict, and he became a Christian through the Bethany Christian Trust in Edinburgh, and he's got a wonderful story of how he got saved.

And I was playing with Steph in this youth conference, there was about 300 rowdy teenagers, and they were just chatting each other and making a lot of noise, as teenagers rightfully do, and so they should.

And so the guy, the minister who was leading this service, found out five minutes before it was due to start that Steph had never actually led corporate worship before. He'd just done singer-songwriter stuff in churches.

[12 : 37] He'd just done the testimony gig, that was his thing. And so he found out that, and we all said, don't worry, Steph will be absolutely grand, he'll be fine, don't worry about it.

And so Steph comes out onto the place where the band are, the stage, if you want to call it that, and he comes forward, and he's a big guy, he's quite intimidating, he's got a big beard, he's got a sleeve of tattoos all down his arms, you know, he's got big kind of earrings, you basically wouldn't mess with him if you, you know, were in a dark alley.

And he comes up to the microphone, and he sees all these 300 or so teenagers being all so like, you know, jubilant and happy, and he goes, right, shut up, the Lord of yours.

That was his introduction, and then he went straight into a wee prayer, and he got his guitar, and he started playing Amazing Grace, and I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and his kind of country style.

And it was brilliant, and by the end of the night, the teenagers, you know, from being like, you know, chatting with each other, they were bouncing up and down, praising God, and it was just amazing.

[13 : 47] It was just one of the greatest experiences I've seen. I've also, I would describe another experience in church, where you might think this is going to be quite ridiculous, and you might think, oh, he really is from Martin's Memorial, but it's not a Martin's Memorial story, it was a story when I

was in Edinburgh, and I remember this lady, and to be quite honest, she was quite middle class and conservative, you know, she wasn't full on, hands in the air, you know, what you call her.

But one night, there was just a time where God's goodness was revealed in the praise, we were just, we were praising God and it was just a lot of joy.

And do you know what this lady started doing? And she was not a young lady, not an old lady, she was a middle-aged lady, she started doing a few cartwheels in the church.

Now, I realise this sounds ridiculous, and the minister, you know, so just to kind of paint the scene, the church was set up like it is here, but there was also a side area, which was free, and where there were other seats used to be, but there were no seats there.

So she was in the area here, and she started doing a few cartwheels, and it sounds very irreverent, and actually the minister, he didn't say anything about it, but he said, that's too far, no, no, no, we're all for being joyful, and, you know, having a bit of liberty with how we worship, but no, that's taken it a bit far.

[15 : 22] And so he was going through a series on Samuel at the time, and the next week the passage was going to be on where David danced before the Lord, and where he danced in his, you know, he took off his outer garments and danced before the Lord, and the minister was doing his study that week, and he said, literally, this is, I kid you not, he was looking through this one commentator who said, David was dancing before the Lord in such a manner that it was as if he was doing cartwheels, and the minister said, I read that sentence, and it just, I had to go, okay, now I'm not encouraging cartwheels every single week, or, you know, or that sort of thing, and that, I have to say, that lady, she didn't do that again, you know, that wasn't like it was just crazy, and it was, you know, worship without order, or decency, and all that, but it was a moment, it was a response to the joy of the Lord, and I tell those stories just to kind of put these things side by side, so you've got the reverence and awe of God, where there's a holy hush, but then alongside that, you've got teenagers bouncing up and down, a lady doing cartwheels, and then, where do you and I sit in between that, you know, and it's really what the psalm is saying, what the psalmist is saying to us, come before the Lord in everything, come before the Lord when you wake up, and you, first thing you do is you wipe your sleep from your eyes, and you look at yourself in the mirror, and you think, my hair's in a mess,

I don't look very pretty, I don't look very presentable, and I'm in my pajamas, but the Lord looks at me, and the Lord sings his song, as it says in Zephaniah 3, and that song is one that declares his love and his goodness over me and his joy, his delight, and so isn't it weird how we see in the Bible this picture of both a kind of Presbyterian sort of style worship and a Pentecostal and everything in between worship, that our God is beyond who we might think he is, that he offers us in himself the glory and the goodness of his salvation, and so the first word in this sort of offering to us in this psalm is the word come, so we come as we are, and we come into the presence of the Lord, and whether we are in reverence of who he is, whether we're in great joy, whether we're in other sorts of, when we're confessing sin, or whatever other affection or emotion that might be, we're invited to come before the Lord, the one who is our God, our maker, our master, our father, and when we see the word come, it's presented to us in a way that we go into the presence of the Lord, and then we leave, and we're changed, and we're changed forever, we're transformed, transformed more and more into the image and likeness of Jesus, and that's ultimately what worship does, doesn't it?

That when we come, we leave changed, we don't just come and sing words, we come and we say, I'm worshipping, the living God, I'm singing songs of salvation, I'm blessing the name of the Lord, and that's just such an amazing thing that we get to do, what a privilege.

Psalm 66 says this, come and see the works of God, what's God done in our lives? What works has God done in your lives recently? What works has God done in my life?

Jesus, when he invites us to come, he says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. That's the invite of Jesus. If we're particularly downtrodden, if we're really struggling in life, we come to him, and he fixes us up.

[19 : 19] He puts us back together. He puts us on a solid ground. That's who our saviour is. When we see the word come and Jesus says to his disciples, come, follow me.

Come walk in my footsteps. Come, pick up your cross every day and follow me. When Jesus died and rose again, the disciples and the women who came and saw him, they say, come, come and see the place where he lay.

Come and see the place where your saviour, your dearly loved saviour, Jesus lay. And what about the church where we see in Revelation the spirit and the bride say, come. And the closing words of the Bible where Jesus will wipe every wrong, he'll wipe every tear away. And the closing words of the Bible are this, come, Lord Jesus. And that's our prayer, isn't it? If we're blood-bought believers in Christ, we say every morning, every day, come, Lord Jesus.

[20 : 26] Come, Lord Jesus. It's the first prayer of the early church. Come, Holy Spirit. Come, Lord Jesus. Come into our lives. Do that new work. Do that fresh work so that we'll leave transformed.

We come into your presence and we leave changed and transformed. And so that's the first word we look at tonight, the word come. Come to Jesus.

Come as we are and leave changed. And the second story, sorry, the second word we have in this story is simply the word his.

It is his. It's God's work. So when we think about coming to Jesus, it doesn't all rest on our shoulders. But like Pilgrim's Progress, when Pilgrim goes to the cross and he looks at the cross and his burdens fall off in that memorable image, it's the work of God.

It is his work. And that's what we see throughout this psalm, that we come into his presence. and we recognize that in verse 4 and 5 that in his hand are the depths of the earth.

[21 : 29] It's his, the heights of the mountains. The sea is his. His hand formed the dry land. He's our maker. He's our God. It's him. It is his work. The work of salvation, the work of creation, the work of renewing all of that together.

It's his work. And when we sing that as we did at the beginning and when we read those verses, we might just want to look outside the window and see the beauty of God's creation.

But not only that, we look back to history and we see, well, remember, remember all the times God came in revival power to these parts, to these very streets. And we ask, come Lord Jesus, do your work, his work, the Lord's work.

Let the embers come on every household. Again, as it was. But not as it was, as it will be now. As we also see the cameras going over different parts of the land, that this land, the land of Scotland, is a special place to the Lord where the Lord has moved in revival power in centuries gone by.

And we've got many salvation stories in our history to sing of, to recall, and to celebrate. And that's why we see in verse 6 to 7 that in response to that, the rightful response is to bow down in worship and to kneel before God as our maker, as our master, as our creator.

[22 : 51] And to say that, yeah, we are yours, God. Do with us as you want. Enable us to go in the path that you're leading in front of us. And that as we are your sheep and that you're our shepherd, that as Jesus would say to his disciples in John chapter 10, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they'll never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. No one will snatch them. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine.

That's what the Lord says over you and me. You are mine. You are mine. And we can see of him the salvation work. It is his. It is his. It is his. He's done it.

And the Lord has done this. And it is marvelous in our eyes. And so we're thankful to God for who he is.

That the work of the cross that he's done it before we bring anything of ourselves to God. It's what he's done for us on the cross. It's what Jesus has done through his death and through his resurrection, through his atoning sacrifice that we were dead in our sins and our trespasses but Jesus has brought us alive.

[24 : 03] It's not just good or sound theology. It's very real and experiential that we come to Jesus and we see that it is his work. We come into God's presence. We come to worship our Father who art in heaven.

We come to taste and see that the Lord is good. It is his goodness to us. We come to the waters as those who are weary and thirsty to receive life from his abundance.

We come to the wellspring of life and the source of all goodness to the one whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. We come with rejoicing and singing. We come with reverence and holy fear.

We come in response to who God is and ready to hear and to respond to his voice. You know, as part of our worship this evening, we did sing the wonderful Matt Redmond hymn,!

10,000 reasons. Matt Redmond's well known for singing many modern contemporary songs, really, really good ones like Blessed Be Your Name and another one called The Heart of Worship. [25 : 03] And I don't know if you know the song of that hymn. It was written in the late 90s in Matt Redmond's home church in Watford. And at that time they were going through a pretty tough spiritual season.

They were growing as a church. They were doing lots of great outreach. They were doing lots of good things. Everything that you would tick the box in the church and say, that looks like a good church and they're doing the work of God.

But they had seemed to hit a sort of spiritual plateau. They'd reached a point and they're like, okay, we're pretty good and almost a sort of, we're pretty chuffed for themselves. You know, we can sort of run an autopilot because we know how things can work.

We've got enough people coming in. We're making a sufficient impact that, well, that's okay. You know, we know that it could keep ticking along. At least for another number of years. But the pastor wasn't satisfied with that and recognized that there were as a sort of a response where folks were kind of just riding on the coattails of the success of the church.

And so the pastor did a brave thing. He unplugged all of the instruments and they, well, he kind of did a very island thing. He went all a cappella. And so, but they weren't just singing the Psalms as beautiful as the Psalms are.

[26 : 17] They were singing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and they were doing so without their beloved instruments. And so this trendy church that were singing all these new songs, they all of a sudden had to come with the reality that they didn't have that.

The pastor had taken it away for a season and said, no, we need to get back to what really matters, putting Jesus as the source and the head of the church, putting Jesus back at the center of our lives and in our hearts and how we respond in worship to who he is.

And so in order for this church to find its way again, it had everything stripped away, everything that they thought was important. And the song that was written out of that was Matt Redmond writing this personally and actually became a hymn that was well known around the world, The Heart of Worship.

And the words are really poignant. It says, when the music fades, all is stripped away and I simply come longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless your heart.

I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about you, Jesus. And that was just really a simple cry of his heart but it became an anthem for many other churches around the world.

[27 : 34] And I think we could really translate those words to the words of the psalm here in Psalm 95 and exchange the words of Matt Redmond's hymn for the words, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

And that's the precious reminder that's in this psalm that the Lord is the one that we come to bless, the one that we say we'll forget not all of your benefits. You're the one who will heal all our iniquities, who forgive all our iniquities, who will heal all our diseases, who will redeem our life from the pit, who will crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies, who will satisfy our mouths with good things so that our youths are renewed like the eagles.

Because the reality is that our Christian lives, the end of the Christian life and the Christian's chief concern is that we would live to glorify God and so enjoy him forever.

And so I wonder then in this coming week for you and for me, what might be at least one helpful thing that we can do that will enable us to fix our eyes upon Jesus in our day.

I'm not just talking about a quiet time in the morning or the evening or whatever that is for you, but I'm talking about in the midst of our days, what's one thing that might help us to stay attuned or attentive to Jesus and who he is and the wonder of his love for us.

[29 : 03] what might be something that would help us gaze upon him as we go about our day and enable us to connect to him. May it be that as we engage in this that we'll follow along with the words of the Apostle Paul that we will by the mercies of God, by his mercy, his work, his enabling power, the power of the Holy Spirit, present ourselves, present our whole selves as a living sacrifice.

And in doing so, may we be conformed to the ways of God and transformed by the work of God in order that we may discern the will of God for our lives. So that's the second word then.

The first word, come, come into his presence. Second, that God's work, it's his work and we get to participate in that, but we recognize that it's his work. And then the third word we're looking at this evening is the word today.

And it's the word that we find at the end of verse seven. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as it was in Massa and Meribah. And this is where we see the psalm kind of takes a bit of a U-turn because it seems all nice and happy, all nice and praiseworthy and declaring the goodness and the glory of God and how we worship.

But then the psalm writer is taking that U-turn and going off in a bit more of a solemn direction. If I was to share with you though the story of how that happens, let me first share with you a little personal story because these final verses share part of the story of God's people in the wilderness, in the Exodus.

[30 : 49] Because what we find in those Bible stories is part of our story and how we've known times of wilderness and exile from God. How we have known where there was a BC before Christ point to us and then after we meet Christ and then Anno Domini where we live in the year of our Lord when we follow in his ways.

But if I was to share with you part of my own testimony, part of my own journey, we all have different people that God puts and we connect the dots in how God uses different people. But if I was to have to name someone specific who I'm sure is known in this neck of the woods, it would be a gentleman.

He was a Free Church elder when I was brought up in Stornoway Free Church. The late Ken MacLeod who's a wonderful guy, just a really gracious and humble servant of God and, you know, of course a former head teacher at Shawbost Primary.

I just remember him being such a wonderful guy to look up to and I remember when I had stopped going to the youth fellowships as a teenager because most of my friends stopped going and I thought, well, there's no much point in me just going on my own and I stopped going for a few months and then one night just something gripped my heart and I felt I just needed to go to the youth fellowship and so Ken happened to be speaking that evening and I think he was speaking on Moldova or Blytheswood or something but I just went having felt this prompt from God and I was sitting in the front row just kind of my own twiddling my thumbs it was the day before smartphones so, you know, we just sat doing nothing as teenagers you know, remember those days and Ken came up to me and he looked at me and he went, so what brings you here tonight?

and I just went, I don't know, I just felt that I had to be there I just feel I have to be here and he kind of went, hmm, that's interesting, very interesting and sort of walked off and I was like, you know, you know that God's working in my heart you know that God's doing something here but it was because of someone like Ken who had that aroma if you can describe that of Christ just, you know, emanating from him that he was just such a godly guy but in such a humble way that he lived his life and in fact my brother was up in Easter holidays and he happened to bump into Ken's daughter Elizabeth and my brother Stuart lived away from Lewis for a long time now and he said, oh, I recognize her face but who is that?

[33 : 33] and I said, well that's such and such and you'll know her late father, Ken and the first thing my brother said and my brother, you know, he's not a Christian but he said, oh, Ken, what a lovely guy that was you know, he used to give me a lift to my school placement to Shobos every day he used to pick me up and he was such a love, there was just something about that guy you know, I just, I can't cut people my hand in it but there was something about that guy and he didn't have to go out of his way to do that but he did and when I look and I think about folks like Ken I think of how God uses someone like that in a way that wasn't so overt but it was in a gentle drawing me to faith through someone who had clearly lived out his faith in a way that was very attractive and it made me think well, if that's what it looks like to follow Jesus then I want that and so we find in this psalm in this turning point that God's people they had seen someone who had reflected the goodness of God in Moses were brought back to the Exodus story they had seen

God work wonders and miracles he'd taken them out of Egypt he'd taken them through the Red Sea millions of them had marched through this Red Sea that had been parted in the middle God had worked the plagues the miracles all the stuff that you read about in Exodus and what we find in Exodus 15 is there's beautiful salvation song where the people are so overjoyed and so filled with the goodness and the glory of God that they are able to sing and Moses writes this song the Lord is my strength and my song he has become my salvation this is my God and I will praise him my

father's God and I will exalt him just fits right in the Psalms doesn't it but then in chapter 16 it all changes just in a matter of days as they are traveling through the desert and they start to grumble and they didn't see the reflection of God's beauty even though it had been presented to them for instance they arrive at Marsh and they find water that they cannot drink and God shows up through Moses and he tells them this is how you're going to transform it from bitterness to sweetness that it's going to be a blessing for my people in Egypt that they saw the goodness of God that God had rained hail and locusts came up and they covered the ground they devoured all the produce now in the deliverance of God

God had instead of raining hail he'd rained bread down he'd provide meat for the people to eat in the form of quail that comes up from the ground not locusts that come up but quail and it covers the ground and that they would be a blessing for the people of God and we find that that's a form of the curse being reversed and then there's the bread which God provides not as just future proofing against famine but he's deliberately inviting his people to say every day to the Lord give us this day our daily bread I'm inviting you to trust me come this is my work this is the work of God trust me today and then in Exodus 17 things turn even worse that the hearts of the people of God are hardened akin to Pharaoh when we read in the earlier chapters of Exodus his heart became really hard the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart again and again we read that and Moses cries out to the Lord and he says what's going on here

Lord the people are saying is the Lord really among us where's where's someone like Moses is he really the prophet of God where's the guy like Ken McLeod who was really just such a shining example for Jesus Moses you've led us out of this place and we're in the middle of nowhere what are you doing and so this psalm is telling us in conclusion that there's a choice at hand to stay in the wilderness to follow God's leading God's already promised us his presence and us today as New Testament people we know Jesus we know the promised presence of his Holy Spirit they in the Old Testament the people of God knew the pillars of cloud and fire as symbols of God's presence we know the presence of the Holy Spirit living in and through us active shaping us but they were a people who didn't enter the rest of God and so today for us there's a choice to to walk with God or to walk following our own desires to say today choose whom we will serve choose to follow Jesus or choose to look back in anger there's the oasis don't look back in anger today choose to serve Jesus choose to walk in his ways choose to receive his forgiveness choose to be the people of God those who are greatly loved by God those who are as his children dearly beloved by him and of him those who are alive and awakened to the reality that God will never leave us he'll never forsake us that we have the spirit of the living God dwelling inside us at work in us we can choose that or we can choose to say maybe maybe I'll maybe I'll respond to God another day another time and how many times have we heard maybe throughout the years have we maybe been walking with the Lord a number of years now isn't it wonderful that such and such became forward this year isn't it amazing that so and so went to the prayer meeting oh that you know I think they're starting to you know come alive to the work of God but as well as hearing that we've also heard well I know that they've been coming for years and years but they're not sitting at the table of the Lord Jesus Christ just yet they're nearly but not quite there yet this psalm tells us that it's not enough to know enough about God that will get us over the line but that we need to come to God say

[39 : 57] God I'm yours you're mine it's your work and today I want to respond not another day because there might not be another day not another time because God might have said well you know what that person I've come to that person again and again and again and they've said I'm going to put it off I'm going to put it off I'm going to put it off and wait till my deathbed or near enough and so the Lord's saying well okay maybe we'll just leave you today may be our final chance to respond to God in salvation but today may also be a time where God is saying to us as a church and I don't mean just this church but the church at large I'm doing a new thing I'm doing something fresh and it's wonderful to see a building here that looks fresh and in Mark's Memorial we're just about to open the barn project the barn family centre sorry it's an extension of the work of the shed project but it's not enough just to have a nice building nice lovely building for church members it's not for us it's for the work of God isn't it and it's for our communities and it's for us to say

Lord you're the potter we're the clay we want to respond to your work and say today do a new thing do a new thing in our day in a day of your power revive us again and this is what we're seeing actually throughout our country we're hearing signs of this sort of quiet revival maybe it's not so quiet anymore if it's been reported about so much but it is so encouraging of especially young

people coming alive to the wonder of who God is and what the plans God has for their lives and I find that just really encourages me greatly I was at the SU camp magnitude in the summer and actually when I was driving down the road I think I saw three free church youth camps buses and I know there's such great work going on in the free church youth camps I actually heard of a testimony of a young boy who was really struggling with mental health struggling with bullying in school and it was actually an elder in one of the free churches in Stornoway he said just got alongside him really blessed him really impacted his life

God is at work in the free church youth camps God is at work in all sorts of different denominations and just to point to the magnitude when I was down there in one evening they had a call or more than one evening sorry of if you want to come forward and profess your faith in Jesus come do so and there wasn't any hype or any sort of things to emotionalise it it was simply come to Jesus and the amount of young people that got out of their seats and came forward honestly I was in tears young kids 12 13 you know up to 18 and they were just coming forward and on the very last night I was standing in the big marquee tent and there was a girl a couple of pals they were maybe about 17 and they were I could see that you know that God was working in them and there was a call for salvation and they held their girls hands they went up together they were holding hands three pals and they went with her to the front tears in their eyes she got a bag where a wee bible and actually sorry

I forgot to say one night SU they ran out of bible gift bags so many people had become Christians one night but anyway to go back to the story of that girl and our pals they walked back she had tears in her eyes as she walked up as she received Christ as her saviour as she received a gift bag as she received some prayer just a prayer of blessing that God would bless her from the tears that followed her on the way up there was just such joy in her face on the way back down and to see that and to see what God is doing it was just incredible I'm hearing similar reports in England and different places of the country that God is doing a new thing he's the prayers of the saints that have gone before us even those who have passed on and those of older generations God is doing a new thing and I know I said the word conclusion a wee while ago now so I apologise so the word today is yeah let's ask God today in a day of your power let's not harden our hearts as they did in Moses' day as we've known that we know of people that we pray for that there's a hardening to the gospel but Lord let's pray

Lord break our hearts for what breaks yours in order that we would see people come to know Jesus and be alive to the reality of the wonder of his love for us let's pray deeply deeply